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12.05 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Reported situation arising out of continuous erosion on the banks of rivers in West Bengal, particularly in Murshidabad and Malda and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto

Title : Calling attention of the Minister of Water Resources called by Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi to the situation arising out of continuous erosion on the banks of rivers in West Bengal, particularly in Murshidabad, Malda and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Water Resources to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

> "Situation arising out of continuous erosion on the banks of rivers in West Bengal, particularly in Murshidabad and Malda, and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto. "

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): Sir, Shri P.R. Dasmunsi, Member of Parliament, has brought out the issue of erosion on the banks of rivers in West Bengal, particularly in Murshidabad and Malda.

Sir, the Flood Management, including river erosion, being a State subject, investigation, planning and implementation of flood management schemes are within the purview of the respective State Governments. However, the Central Government has also been rendering assistance to various State Governments including West Bengal from time to time.

Ganga Flood Control Commission (GFCC) constituted by the Central Government in 1972 had prepared comprehensive plans for flood management for the 23 river systems of Ganga basin of which West Bengal is also a part. These plans were forwarded to the concerned State Governments for implementation of the recommendations contained therein.

Sir, for tackling the problem of erosion, the Planning Commission, Government of India, in 1996, had constituted an Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri G.R. Keskar, the then Member (RM), Central Water Commission which suggested various short-term and long-term measures. The State Government started execution of works recommended by the Expert Committee since 1997-98 and they have incurred an expenditure of about Rs. 78.57 crore in this regard. The Planning Commission had sanctioned additional funds of Rs. 30 crore to West Bengal to enable it to take up top priority schemes during the financial year 1998-99. Farakka Barrage Project Authority (FBPA) has also incurred an expenditure of Rs. 30 crore since IX Plan on anti-erosion works both on upstream and downstream of Farakka Barrage.

Sir, earlier during December 1999, the Government of India had deputed a Central Team led by Shri G.N. Murthy, the then Chairman, GFCC, to visit the critical erosion sites on river Ganga in various States including West Bengal. The team identified critical sites/reaches and recommended anti-erosion measures to be taken up on priority. On the recommendation of the Committee, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme was formulated by the Ministry of Water Resources which came into operation in January, 2001. Against the Central share of Rs. 30 crore for West Bengal, a total amount of Rs. 27.66 crore has already been released. Further release of funds will depend upon the receipt of utilisation certificate from the State Government. Sir, I repeat again that further release of funds will depend upon the utilisation certificate from the State Government.

I am glad to inform the House that keeping in view the seriousness of the erosion and its associated problems, the Government of India decided to continue the above scheme further during the Tenth Five Year Plan after completion of the existing on-going scheme and for this purpose, a Committee was constituted which also included a representative from West Bengal. Based on the recommendations of this Committee, another Centrally Sponsored Scheme has been formulated wherein a further provision of Rs. 51 crore has been made for West Bengal to take up critical anti-erosion works along Ganga, Bhagirathi, Mahananda and other rivers. The above Committee also opined that with the execution of the above works, the recommendations of the Keskar Committee would also be addressed.

Further, in connection with the erosion problem on the left bank of Ganga on the upstream of barrage near

Panchanandpur, the Model Studies were conducted by the Central Water and Power Research Station (CWPRS) in July/August, 2003. The Report has already been sent to the Government of West Bengal for necessary follow-up action.

I would also like to apprise the House that for the Annual Plan of 2003-04 of West Bengal, the Planning Commission has approved Rs. 30 crore as one time additional Central assistance to the State for priority schemes. Out of this, the State Government has allocated Rs. 20 crore for erosion control works on river Ganga/Padma.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister's statement. It is really amazing that, time and again, with the intervention of several hon. Members, the entire understanding and concept of erosion in West Bengal rivers have not yet been understood by the Ministry of Water Resources. According to the Ministry of Water Resources, the flood management and erosion management are designed only under the map of the directions of the Ganga Flood Control Commission in Ganga Basin which is not a fact. When this concept was conceived, the limited arteries of Ganga and Bhagirathi used to do that. But now the whole thing has changed. Beyond Rajmahal, if you go another 30 kilometres, you would find two rivers are connecting together, that is, one from Ganges and another from Phulwara in Bihar. The devastation is at the peak there. Whenever I raised the question, the Government took the textual position, that is, they mentioned about Ganga Flood Control. But the Government does not understand that there is also the Mahananda Division that is equally eroding the whole area. Therefore, not a single penny is ordered or advised. ...(*Interruptions*)

For the last four years, there have been at least 12 interventions from the same Ministry and the same Minister. There have been so many Calling Attention Notices. But the reply has been the same.

Sir, last time, there was an interaction in your presence. Both the Minister and Shri Somnath Chatterjee were present in the House. The Minister instantly said that if we sent the proposals about the erosion matters, he would consider it. Within three days, I had sent the proposals duly certified by the district administration. I also gave a copy of that to you. His reply was that if its cost were above Rs. 3 crore, it would be examined by them. In case the cost is below Rs. 3 crore, then we should go to the State Governments. What is the point in asking us to give the proposals?

Now I quote what Shri K.C. Pant replied from the Planning Commission:

> "I find 18 schemes cost less than Rs. 3 crore. Two of the schemes cost more than Rs. 6.64 lakh. Each scheme needs to have techno-economic survey and be cleared by the Ganga Flood Control Commission. Investment clearance from the Planning Commission is also required."

Again the Planning Commission also made the mistake of mentioning Ganga Flood Control Commission. I have been trying and trying. The Ganga Flood Control Commission covers the Bhagirathi, the Murshidabad district and part of Malda up to Rajmahal. Beyond that, it is Mahananda where from the devastation is taking place. I would request the hon. Minister to find it out from his Secretariat. Panchanandpur comes under Ganga Flood Control. Ratua, Bilaimari and Mahanandtola, where 90 villages have been washed away, come under Mahananda. Since they come under Mahananda, they do not do anything.

In Murshidabad, in spite of Minister's visit and assurance, the erosion is continuing unabated. Erosion is taking place even in Rulian city, Shamsherganj block, Lalgola block, Raniganj block and Jalangi block. It is also taking place near the banks of the Ganges and also in Warampur, Nawadeep, Chandernagar.

Now I am mentioning three places. I can say with authority that these places even though having serious erosion have not been mentioned either by the Murthy Committee or the Keskar Committee in their Reports. Panchanandpur, Manikchak, Bilaimari, Mahanandtola of Malda, Nagar at Etaha, Aktrei, Matiary have been threatened by Mahananda in Dinajpur, Goalpukar block in Dinajpur, but nothing is there in the Reports of the Keskar Committee and the Murthy Committee since they think that river erosion means only relating to Ganga and Padha limited up to Farrakka.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunsi, now you put the question.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, I am putting the questions. Would the Minister take into account the consultations with the State Government of West Bengal? What is actually required for long-term and short-term measures to prevent the erosion? I say with authority that the costs are not within Rs. 30 crore or Rs. 50 crore. It would be beyond that amount. Is he going to implement the first stage in the first two years of the Tenth Plan?

Would he appoint a Task Force? His bureaucrats should interact with those of the State Government. The real problems have been faced by the Panchayats, the Zilla Parishads and the public representatives. Would a Task

Force interact with the Zilla Parishads of Malda and Murshidabad and the public representatives like MLAs and MPs, and take into account the new areas of erosion and come forward with an *ad hoc* plan in this regard so that the situation could be tackled?

I invited the Minister. But he never found time to go there. He would be shocked to know that Phulwara and the Ganges have been eroding from both the sides in places like Ratua, Bilaimari and Mahanandtola.

I went to the Prime Minister. Places like Ramayanpur, Ziarudintola and Aziztola have been affected one after another. I found mosque, temple and courtyards in the villages. But after ten days, these were submerged under water. That is how the things are going on. They have no plans for their rehabilitation.

So, I would request the Minister that without depending on the bureaucrats, he should personally visit at least the areas of erosion and interact with the Zilla Parishads and also the public representatives so that the ad hoc plan could be considered.

Finally, I would address one more question. Where there is river erosion in some parts of India, there is disaster management. Would he provide an *ad hoc* contingency fund as and when the public representatives make some recommendations on the subject? They would not spend it. You are to refer it to the concerned district for support. Otherwise, the situation would go beyond control. Now the people's representatives have become the victims. I request the Government to consider this matter seriously.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, the hon. Minister would speak.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Let me explain it to the hon. Members. There is a lot of business today. If the entire business is to be completed, I would not be able to allow questions or clarifications in this particular debate. Therefore, please do not insist because it is not possible.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I am going according to the Rules. Please sit down.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Every day, this cannot be done. On the Calling Attention Notice, only those Members would be allowed whose names are here and nobody else.

...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : हर दिन मैं कैसे इजाजत दे सकता हूं ? कोई एक दिन ऐसा बताइए जब आपको चर्चा नहीं चाहिए?

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. Only two or three Members would speak and not more than that.

...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : देखिए, मैं सचमुच कहता हूं कि मैं आपको इजाजत देता हूं लेकिन मेरी बात भी सुनिए। मैं केवल दो-तीन मैम्बर्स को इजाजत दे सकता हैं, सभी को नहीं दूंगा। लेकिन वे केवल प्रश्न ही पूछेंगे। भााण करेंगे तो मैं आपको रोक दूंगा। कृपया चेयर से कोआपरेट करिए।

â€¦ (व्यवधान)

श्री राम विलास पासवान (हाजीपुर) : हमने आपको लिखकर भी दिया था।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : लिखकर सभी ने दिया था।

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN (MURSHIDABAD): Sir, the entire area in my constituency is under erosion. It is not a question of blaming the Government of India or the Government of a State. I have keenly heard the hon. Minister. He has emphatically mentioned that further release of funds would depend on the receipt of utilisation certificates from the State Governments. It is not a case like this. I would like to say that proper and timely funding is very much necessary in West Bengal, particularly in Mushidabad, Malda, Nadia, West Dinajpur and eight other districts. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether a decision has been taken by the Government of India to provide funds properly in order to face this problem. ...(*Interruptions*) The question of rehabilitation is also very much essential. ...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : नहीं, केवल प्रश्न पूछिए। मैं आपको इजाजत नहीं दूंगा। मेरी कर्टसी का आप डिसएडवांटेज लेते हैं, यह ठीक नहीं है। अधीर चौधरी जी, केवल प्रश्न

पूछिए।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Sir, I would like to invite the attention of the hon. Minister on two aspects only.

Firstly, in the village named Fazilpur in Murshidabad District, the gap between the two rivers, on one side Bhagirathi and on the other side Ganga - Padma, has been fast reducing. In the year 1970, it was...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : स्टोरी नहीं बतानी है, केवल प्रश्न पूछना है। अगर आप ऐसा करेंगे, I will stop you and go to the next Member. Please do not take disadvantage of this. If you cannot ask a question, then you can raise this issue under some other rule.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY : Sir, during the last two years, the State of West Bengal has not released central funds for the implementation of the Anti-Erosion scheme in the district of Murshidabad. I would like to know whether the Central Government is going to take any comprehensive stand...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing further will go on record.

(Interruptions) *

श्री राम विलास पासवान : हमें भी एक मिनट दे दें।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मैं सभी सदस्यों को मौका नहीं दे सकता हूं।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

* Not Recorded.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Chowdhary, you were taking undue advantage, therefore, I did not allow you to ask the question.

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI: Sir, the hon. Member, Shri Dasmunsi has stated...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: There are 20 Members who want to ask questions. I cannot permit everybody.

â€¦(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : अधीर रंजन जी का अगला प्रश्न रिकार्ड में नहीं जाएगा।

...(व्यवधान)... *

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने मुझे सवाल पूछने का मौका दिया, मैं आपका आभारी हूं। मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि बिहार के अंदर बक्सर और राजमहल तक गंगा नदी का कटाव हो रहा है। जिसमें खासकर महनार और मोहिउद्दीन नगर के कई गांव कटकर गंगा नदी में चले गए हैं। महनार और मोहिउद्दीन नगर प्रखंड में सड़क कट रही है। सरकार उसे बचाने और उसके पुनर्वास के लिए कौन सी कार्रवाई करने जा रही है ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : अब मंत्री जी उत्तर देंगे।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

श्री राम विलास पासवान : हम एक ही प्रश्न पूछना चाहते हैंâ€¦(व्यवधान)

श्री अर्जुनचरण सेठी यह कालिंग अटेंशन वैस्ट बंगाल के बारे में है और ये बिहार के बारे में पूछ रहे हैं।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप ठीक कह रहे हैं। यह बिहार का विाय नहीं है। मैं आपकी दिक्कत समझता हूं।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप कोआपरेट करें, आगे का बिजनेस भी बहुत जरूरी है।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : अब मंत्री जी को उत्तर देने दें। There is a lot of Business to be completed today.

â€¦(व्यवधान)

* Not Recorded.

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मेरी रिक्वेस्ट है, अब आप बैठ जाएं। I am not going to take 'Zero Hour' and there will not be any Lunch Hour today, as you all understand.

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI: Sir, the hon. Member, Shri Dasmunsi has remarked that other than Ganga no other river has been mentioned and that no anti-erosion work has been undertaken by the Government of India.

I would like to mention and I have already stated in my statement that Mahananda Basin has been included in the Vashishtha Committee. Recently, we have constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Shri Vashishtha, Member, CWC. He has visited the Mahananda area and a few other areas which required urgent attention. These areas have been included and a sum of about Rs.249 crore has been provided for the anti-erosion work on Mahananda river.

Similarly, so many measures are taken for the anti-erosion work on Bhagirathi. Mahananda and other rivers have been included in the recently constituted committee under the chairmanship of Shri Vashishtha, Member, CWC. The total amount that we have provided to the State of West Bengal over the years for anti-erosion works is Rs.161 crore. Since 1996-97 till date, we have provided Rs.161 crore in favour of the State of West Bengal.

As has already been mentioned, the practice is that we release the funds in favour of the State Government and the State Government has to execute the work. Unless they execute the work on time and give us utilization certificate, it will be difficult on the part of my Ministry to provide /release funds. We cannot do everything on our own. So far as Panchanandpur is concerned, CWPRS, an organisation under my Ministry, has been given the charge to study the scouring of river Ganga at Rajmahal Area. CWPRS is now having physical model studies at Pune. The first & second Report has already been submitted to the State Government of West Bengal and further studies are also being made.

Sir, so far as the questions asked by hon. Member Shri Hassan are concerned, Sir, I have, while replying to the last debate in the Lok Sabha on this particular subject, given details how we are taking steps. A total sum of Rs.161 crore will be providing to the State Government of West Bengal and whatever the Keskar Committee recommended, we have already complied with in favour of the State Government of West Bengal and other States such as Bihar, UP and Uttaranchal etc.

Sir, I would like to be very frank with you. The subject of water logging, drainage and erosion is in the State List. Unless they give us the details and submit the proposal to us, we cannot go there and visit the spot and take the work on our own. We cannot take...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : I gave the proposal. I sent you the proposal in detail, certified by the Government.

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI: Dasmunshi*ji,* I have already sent the proposal to the State Government. It is the State Government who are to submit the proposal. Unless they submit the proposal, we cannot discuss with the District Administration to consider the proposal and get it implemented. This is the situation, Sir.